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SERMON

Preached at the

ORDINATION

Of the REVEREND

Mr. JOHN NOTCUTT,

AT THE

Meeting-House in *Green-Street*,
Cambridge,

On JULY 22, 1735.

By WILLIAM FORD.

With the CHARGE then given him by the
Rev'd. Mr. TOBIAS WILDBOAR;

AND

Mr. Notcutt's CONFESSION of his FAITH.

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I TIM. iv. 14.

*Neglect not the Gift that is in thee,
which was given thee by Prophecy,
with the laying on of the Hands of
the Presbytery.*



THE Office of the Ministry, as it is highly useful, and necessary for the Church of God; and as it reflects very great honour upon those that are employed in it, so it requires very considerable Labour and Diligence, in order to the due fulfilling of it: and for any to enter upon it without serious Consideration, and without being previously in some good degree qualified for it, must needs be very rash and unadvised. And though a Man be ever so well qualified for it, or willing to engage in it, yet ought he not to presume so far as to take it upon him, until he be first called of God; and when the Call of God is visible and apparent, it is then incumbent upon him to apply to the proper Officers of the Church of *Christ*, who are to judge of his Call, and to give him a regular Investiture in his Office according to *Christ's* Appointment.

This is the Service which has now engaged our Attendance; and our Usage, in setting apart some time for *Fasting* and *Prayer*, upon such an Occasion,

sion, cannot be disapproved by any unprejudiced Person; nor can a Discourse concerning the *right Ordination of Ministers*, and a solemn *Charge* to Ministers, and People, be unsuitable, at such a time. The former of these is at your repeated earnest Request my Province at this time; and the Words of my Text are, I think, such as will directly lead me to the Subject which I am to treat of, *viz.*

That the Ministerial Office is by virtue of *Christ's* Appointment to be conveyed to proper Persons, by the laying on of the Hands of the Presbytery.

As our Lord himself, while on Earth, did commission his Apostles, and others to go forth, and preach the Gospel, at first confining them to speak *to the lost Sheep of the House of Israel*; so after his Resurrection, he lets them know their Commission was to be enlarged; and tho' they were to *begin at Jerusalem*, yet they were *to go into all the World*, *Mark xvi. 15.* And he not only sent them, but gave them Authority to ordain others to the Work of the Ministry, without which there could have been but little progress made at all, and the Work of Preaching must have ceased with that Generation: but that was not his Intent, he designed a Succession of Ministers from his Apostles, to be invested with the ministerial Office in a regular manner, for the Edification of the Church to the end of Time. And as the *Holy Ghost* inspired Men to write Gospels and Epistles to particular Churches, to direct Christians in all the Parts of their Duty; so, by the same Inspiration, are three Epistles written to Ministers, two to *Timothy*, and one to *Titus*, directing Gospel-Ministers in all the Branches of their Office, and particularly, in the Ordination of those, who are to be Officers in the Church of *Christ*: and from hence, as from the purest Fountain, we are to take our Directions for this Work, rather than from any uninspired Men, how
near

near soever they may have lived to the Apostolic Times.

And because the Words of the Text seem to be as comprehensive of Instruction herein, as any one Verse I could find, I have chosen to make them the Foundation of this Discourse. Wherein,

I. I would consider what that Gift is, of which the Apostle puts *Timothy* in mind.

II. How it is that this Gift is said to have been given him by Prophecy.

III. Show what hand the Presbytery have in the Ordination of a Minister.

IV. Suggest something concerning the neglecting this Gift, which the Apostle cautions *Timothy* against. And then close with a few Reflections.

I. What is that Gift which was in *Timothy*, of which the Apostle puts him in remembrance. And,

1. Some are of opinion, that this was an extraordinary Gift, and so peculiar to that day; and not any Gift that Ministers are now possessed of. The Word *χάρισμα* here used, is indeed applied to those extraordinary Gifts of which we are speaking, in several places of Scripture, as *Rom. xii. 6. Having therefore Gifts differing according to the Grace that is given us, whether Prophecy, let us prophesy according to the Proportion of Faith, &c.* and more evidently still, *1 Cor. xii. 4. compar'd with 9, 10 Verses. Now there are Diversities of Gifts, but the same Spirit.* And he afterwards enumerates some of them, taking particular notice of the *χάρισματα ἰαμάτων*, the Gifts of Healing, and of the working of Miracles, and Prophecy, and discerning Spirits and divers kinds of Tongues, and Interpretation of Tongues. And the Word is used in the 28th and 30th Verses, and certainly applied to such extraordinary Gifts in both those Verses. But it is observable, that in all those places it is used in the plural Number; for of these

Gifts there were diverse kinds ; and tho' some had only some of them, and others had others of these Gifts, yet it is very probable, *Timothy* the Evangelist had many, being so extraordinary a Person ; and therefore I can't help dissenting from those that are of the opinion, that this was an extraordinary Gift. Surely *Timothy* would have been admonished not to neglect the Gifts that were in him ; and elsewhere to stir up the Gifts that he had ; and the Apostle would not have spoken in the singular Number in both places, if he really intended those many Gifts which there is no room to question whether *Timothy* had.

2. Others think therefore that this Gift is the Ministerial Office itself, which it would be very proper for him to be reminded not to neglect. And so when he calls upon him, 2 *Tim.* i. 6. to stir up the Gift which was in him, I think it is most probable that he designed to quicken him to Vigour in his Work, and not to suffer his Office to be neglected. And I am the rather inclined to be of this opinion, because the Word *χάρις*, of near affinity with *χάρισμα* in the Text, is actually applied, as is evident, to the Office of the Ministry. Thus *Eph.* iii. 7. *I was made a Minister of the Gospel, according to the Gift of the Grace of God given unto me :* and Verse 8. *Unto me who am less than the least of all Saints, ἐν ἐμοὶ ἡ χάρις ὁμοῦν ἡ χάρις ὁμοῦν is this Grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable Riches of Christ.* And the Apostle writing to the Romans Ch. xv. 15, 16. speaks of the Grace which was given him of God, that He should be a Minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the Gospel of God. What I have to remark from these Places of Scripture, is, that since it is evident it is the Ministry that is the *δῶρον τῆς χάριτος τοῦ Θεοῦ*, the gift of the Grace of God, then it is most likely that this is the *χάρισμα* of which the Text speaks, which signifies a gift of Grace too :
and

and this is the more probable, as it best compleats the Sense, and is most easy and intelligible.

Let Ministers then recollect, that the Ministerial Office is a *Gift of God*, by which, as we have considerable Honour conferred upon us, so an important Trust is reposed in us: and how much soever *Ministers*, and their *Office*, may be contemned, by the Pretenders to Wit and Smartness in our day, wherein we are making swift progress towards Infidelity and Atheism, it is plain that God himself, and inspired Men, thought it a considerable Mark of the divine Favour to be thus intrusted. *1 Tim. i. 12. I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the Ministry.* And they are called by many Names in Scripture, which set forth the Greatness of the Gift bestowed upon those, whom God calls to this Work. They are *Pastors*, and *Teachers*, *Eph. iv. 11.* they are *Elders* and *Overseers* in the Church of Christ, *Acts xx. 17.* comp. with 28. they are *Stewards of the Mysteries of God*, *1 Cor. iv. 1, 2.* they are *over Christians in the Lord*, *1 Thes. v. 12.* and they are *to rule in the Church*; which Rule is necessary, that the Church of God may be *duly taken care of*, *1 Tim. iii. 4, 5.* and *1 Tim. v. 17.* Yea, they are *ἡγούμενοι*, *Leaders of God's People*, *Heb. xiii. 17.* Shall I add, they are *Ambassadors for Christ*, who do, *in God's stead*, negotiate with Men, endeavouring to accommodate all Differences between him and Sinners, and to effect a compleat *Reconciliation*, *2 Cor. v. 20.* Yea, Ministers are *Angels*, *Rev. ii. 1, 8, 18.* As the Apostle says, in another Case, *I magnify mine Office*; so give me leave, upon this Occasion, to say, that it is fit we should look upon the Ministerial Office as a valuable Gift of God; and it will appear so with the fullest Evidence, when faithful Ministers that *have turned many to Righteousness, shall shine as the Stars for*

for ever and ever ; which is spoken of as an advanced Happiness to be conferred on such, superiour to that of common Saints, *Dan. xii. 3.* With regard to ourselves, you see our Office is a Gift.

And so it is with respect to the Church, *Eph. iv. 11, 12.* Ministers are to be *Labourers* and *Watchmen*, to take pains, and be always employed for the benefit of God's People. My Brethren, tho' we look upon our Office as very honourable, yet we take pleasure in being *your Servants for Jesus sake*, *2 Cor. iv. 5.* and I hope we can say, *We seek not yours, but you*; and that we will *gladly spend, and be spent for you*, *2 Cor. xii. 14, 15.* And to have a number of Men set apart for the Work of the Ministry, whose Study and Labour, whose Time and Talents are all to be laid out to the advancing your best Interest as far as ever they are able, must be a very likely means of being greatly advantageous to you ; especially as you have the Promise of *Christ* to be *with you* in this way, *always even to the end of the World*, *Mat. xxviii. 20.* And I believe and hope you esteem the Ministerial Office a very valuable Gift to yourselves, as well as it is to us who are invested with it.

II. Let us consider how it is that this Gift is said to have been given him by PROPHECY. To understand which aright, let it be observed that the Apostles had the Gift of discerning of Spirits, which, says Dr. *Whitby* *, not only imports the Faculty of discerning betwixt the Impulse of false Prophets and true ones, and betwixt the lying Wonders and magical Operations of evil Spirits, and the Powers of the *Holy Ghost* ; but also a Judgment of discerning the Spirits of Men, whether they were qualified for such an Office in the Church, and accordingly chusing them out for that Work.

Thus

* Vide *Whitby* in *1 Cor. xii. 7, 8, 9, 10.*

Thus the Appointment of *Paul*, and *Barnabas*, to a particular Service, is ascribed to the Spirit, *Acts* xiii. 2, 3. And so is the Constitution of Bishops, or Elders in the Church at *Ephesus*, *Acts* xx. 28. And I find that *Clemens Romanus* says the Apostles chose Bishops and Deacons with the full Assurance of the *Holy Ghost*, having a perfect Knowledge of them, and making trial of them by the Spirit. And Dr. *Whitby* in his Note upon *1 Tim.* i. 18. cites several of the Fathers, all of them testifying the same thing. And as to *Timothy* in particular, as our Text hints very strongly that it was so in his Case, so in the Place but now referred to, it is abundantly evident. *1 Tim.* i. 18. *This Charge I commit unto thee, my Son Timothy, according to the Prophecies which went before of thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare.* How long this discerning of the Spirits was continued in the Church, I do not determine ; or whether in the setting apart every Minister it was afforded, is not to me very evident : for if it was, surely there never had been any improper Persons put into the Ministry during that Dispensation, nor would there have been occasion for that Caution, *Lay hands suddenly upon no Man*, *1 Tim.* v. 22. However, in the Ordination of *Timothy*, they had such divine Intimation ; and this is the thing that is implied in his ministerial Investitures being given him by Prophecy : for whether the discerning of Spirits does include this or no, yet surely Prophecy must import the Foresight, and, it may be, previous Declaration of his fitness for this Office. No such Intimations are now given concerning the Qualifications of any for their Work ; and therefore what was known of *Timothy* in an extraordinary way, we are to endeavour to get as good knowledge of as we can in an ordinary way ; I mean, the fitness of Persons for their Office, who desire Ordination.

And

And though there is, without doubt, very considerable difference in the Qualifications of Persons for the Ministry ; yet I persuade my self, that you, my Brethren, in the Ministry, do always get as good Information as you can, of the Furniture of those you set apart for this Work, both as Christians and as Ministers ; and do not ordain any, concerning whom you have not ground to believe they are good Men, and are like to make good Ministers. And though we cannot prophesy that it will certainly be so in every instance of our ordaining Ministers, yet after the best Information, we may surely in Faith commend such to God, and recommend them to those Churches that shall see good to chuse them to be their Pastors.

III. Let us proceed to enquire what hand the Presbytery have in the Ordination of Ministers. And here there will be three things that require distinct Consideration, *viz.* that Ministers are the proper Ordainers of other Ministers ; that the Ministers to be employed in this Work are Presbyters, and that Ordination, by Imposition of Hands, is most agreeable to Scripture-Precept and Example.

I. Ministers are the proper Ordainers of other Ministers. Whatever may be pretended by some *, who claim this Right of Ordination as belonging to the Laity, of their having a natural Right to appoint who shall officiate to them in holy things ; I do not see that it is at all to the purpose, for I shall readily allow these two things.

(I.) That *Christ Jesus*, as the great Head of his Church, does himself give commission to all true and faithful Ministers. It is He that makes Persons his Ministers ; it is He that inclines their Hearts to the Work, that gives them Qualifications for it, and who calls them out unto it. As the
Hearts

* Rights of the Christian Church, p. 80.

Hearts of Kings, so the Hearts of all Men are *in the hand of the Lord*, and he can influence them according to his Pleasure ; and he is no true Minister of *Christ*, whose Heart is not in his Work, who does not delight in his Employment, and prefer this to any other Calling whatsoever ; and that not from any unworthy Considerations, but from a thorough Liking and Approbation of it : And it is therefore the first Question which is put to those who come to be ordained among our Brethren in the Establishment, even only to the Office of a Deacon, Whether *they are persuaded that they are internally moved by the Instinct of the Holy Spirit to take upon them this Work and Office ?* to which they all answer in the Affirmative. So that it is evident, that those who advance the Authority of the Ordainers to the highest degree, do not question whether there be this inclining of the Heart to the Work by a divine Impulse ; and whomsoever he calls to the Work, he either finds, or makes qualified for it. None but Persons of a good Character and Behaviour, of an holy, inoffensive, and sober Life, are called of God to this Office ; nor does He commission any who are not *apt to teach*, 1 Tim. iii. 2. and of some Ability to convince Gainstayers, Tit. i. 9. And Soundness in the Faith is of no small moment, as a Qualification for a Gospel-Minister, Tit. ii. 1. I mean Scripture Orthodoxy, even that sound Doctrine, which the Apostle in the whole of that Chapter gives us a summary of ; and he can be no good Minister of Christ that *teaches any otherwise*, and who does not consent to those that are truly wholesome Words, even the Words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the Doctrine which is according to Godliness, 1 Tim. vi. 3. And as extraordinary Gifts are now ceased, and the Enemies of Religion are many of them Persons of very great Learning and Abilities, it seems a

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necessary

necessary Qualification of a good Minister, to be furnished with some good degree of human Learning, and to be capable of reasoning with considerable Accuracy, lest instead of promoting, he should rather do a disservice to the Cause he undertakes. Now none of these things do we pretend to confer; these we readily acknowledge are Gifts and Talents received from the great Head of the Church, even our Lord Jesus Christ.

(2.) We also allow the Right of Churches to chuse their own Pastors. If I would not apply to a Lawyer to assist me in preserving my Estate, of whose Honesty and Abilities, I had not a very good Opinion; or make use of a Physician, whose Skill and Fidelity, I did not judge unquestionable; much less would I sit under the Ministry of an ignorant, scandalous and insufficient Man, whoever should be the Persons that claimed an Authority to set such an one over me. And I think it is a People's natural and inalienable Right to chuse such as they apprehend preach most to their Edification, and so as best to answer the Ends of a Gospel Ministry. And surely Ministers have no right to refuse Ordination to Persons thus chosen, unless they can show good Reasons for such refusal.

These things being allowed, I think we may safely advance this Position, That Ministers are actually to be invested with their Office from Christ Jesus, through the Hands of other Ministers; and that Ministers have the Right of Ordination in themselves, and it is not vested in the Christian People. And thus in Scripture, Ordination always was performed by Ministers. So it is expressly told us, that *Paul and Barnabas ordained Elders for every Church in Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch*, Acts xiv. 23. The Author of the *Rights of the Christian Church* alledges, that the word χειροτονήσαντες here used, signifies the Apostles Ordination of them by the Consent of the People expressed by

lifting

lifting up their Hands. But supposing this really was the Case, does that prove Ordination to be a Right of the People's, or rather the contrary, viz. that tho' they had a Right to chuse their own Ministers, the Right of Ordination was not in them? And it is evident, that in the case of *Deacons* only, tho' the People by apostolical Direction *looked out seven Men from among them*, with proper Qualifications for their Office, yet were they not invested with their Office till they had, been *set before the Apostles*, and *appointed by them* to the Work, and actually *ordained by them*, *Acts* vi. 3, 6. And for this reason, *Timothy* has directions given him how he should behave in the Affair of Ordination. Thus he is commanded to *commit to faithful Men, who are able to teach others, what he had received himself from the Apostle before many Witnesses*, 2 *Tim.* ii. 2. And he is bid to *lay Hands suddenly on no Man*, 1 *Tim.* v. 22. And so *Titus* was left in *Crete* for this very purpose, *that he might set in order the things that were wanting, and particularly that he might ordain Elders in every City*, *Tit.* i. 5. And to add no more, the words of the Text do also prove the same thing; for *the Gift* here mentioned, as given by Prophecy, with the laying on of the Hands of the *Presbytery*, is, as we have shown, the ministerial Office. And it is a very just Observation, which Mr. *Peirce* has made in a Sermon of his upon a like Occasion, that, if the Power of Ordination had been in the Churches, if the People had been the Conveyers of the ministerial Office; it is strange that in all the Epistles to the Churches, there should be no rules given concerning the Ministerial Investiture; but this is only mention'd in the Epistles to *Timothy*, and *Titus*, both of them Ministers, it being a matter that was to fall under their Cognizance. *Peirce on Presbyt. Ordin.* p. 62.

2. The Ministers to be employed in this Work are Presbyters. And indeed if it did not belong to them, I know no other Church-Officers to whom it should belong; for there is not, as I can see, any shadow of Argument in Scripture to prove, that our Lord Jesus Christ ever designed to have any standing Officers in his Church superiour to Presbyters. There is indeed one instance of a Person *affecting the Pre-eminence*, which Scripture takes notice of, I mean *Diotrephes*; but his conduct is what St. *John* by no means approved of, but mentions in a manner, which one would have thought might have deterred others from treading in his steps, 3 *John* ix. 10. And tho' it may be proved, that Apostles and Evangelists did ordain Elders, yet it was not as Apostles, and Evangelists, that they did so, but in another Character, *viz.* as Elders themselves. If any such extraordinary Officers were still in being, doubtless nothing of great Importance in the Church would ever be done without their Presence and Concurrence, if it might be had, and the chief and most honourable Part of the Work would without doubt be devolved upon them; but even such would not assume the sole Right of Ordination to themselves, but joined with the Presbytery, or a sufficient number of Elders herein, as is plain by comparing our Text with 2 *Tim.* i. 6. wherein is an Exhortation of much the same Nature with this which we are considering: but *the Gift* which is in the Text, said to be *given with the laying on of the Hands of the Presbytery*, is there said to be in him by the *putting on of the* *Apostle Paul's Hands*.

There is scarce any thing in all Scripture capable of more full Demonstration than that the words *Presbyter* and *Bishop* are used promiscuously for one and same Order of Ministers. Thus *Acts*

xx. 17. comp. 28. *Paul* called for the *Elders*, *πρεσβυτέρους* of the Church of *Ephesus*, and charged them to take heed to the Flock over which the Holy Ghost had made them *ἐπισκόπους* Bishops: our Translators render it Overseers, but it is the very same word which they elsewhere translate Bishops. And so the Apostle *Peter*, styling himself an Elder, writes to the Presbyters of the Church, charging them to feed the Flock of God, *ἐπισκοπέντες* performing the Office of Bishops therein; for so every body that knows the original, knows it should be rendered, 1 *Pet.* v. 1, 2. As to *Diocæsan Bishops*, there are not the least footsteps of them in the New Testament; but, on the contrary, in the Church of *Ephesus*, and in the Church at *Philippi*, the Scriptures take express notice of several Bishops. And indeed the very Name *ἐπίσκοπος* would lead any man to think, that nothing more is expected from such an Officer, than that he should *ἐπισκοπεῖν*, take the Oversight of the Church committed to him.

But, what, is there no Intimation in Scripture of some superiour standing Officers in the Church to Presbyters? Are not the *Angels* of the seven Churches, *Rev.* ii. iii. of an higher Order than common *Elders*? And were not *Timothy*, and *Titus*, *Diocæsan Bishops*? And is not the Right of Ordination vested in *Timothy* and *Titus* by virtue of their Episcopal Character, the one being *Bishop of Ephesus*, and the other of *Crete*?

It is thought by some, that this is an Objection of mighty force; but I declare I do not apprehend the great Strength of any thing that is here objected.

As to what is said concerning the *Angels* of the Churches; I think no sober Man can imagine, that a solid Argument can be drawn from hence to prove Bishops Superiority to Presbyters: The

Apostle *John* neither in his Gospel, Epistles, nor in the Revelations, uses the word *Bishop* so much as once, tho' he uses the word *Presbyter* or *Elder* diverse times, applying it to himself more than once; and there is more ground, if we must fancy these Angels to be single Persons, to think that they were *Presbyters* than *Bishops*, because he speaks of no such Persons*. But it is far the most probable Opinion, that it is the *Ministry* in a *collective View*, that are addressed under the Name of *Angels*. And so our Bishops of the Church of *England*, in the Contents of the Bible at its first Edition after this newest Translation, by Order of King *James* the First, expound the *Angels* of the seven Churches to be the *Ministers* of them: the Contents of the second Chapter of *Revelations* running thus; *What is commanded to be written to the Angels, that is, the Ministers of the Churches of Ephesus, Smyrna, &c.* As to the *Angels* in this place, it is plain they are not *Angels* by *Nature*, but by *Office*; and so according to the original meaning of the Word, all faithful Ministers are *Angels*, i. e. *Messengers* of the Lord, *Mal.* ii. 7. And we are *Embassadors* for Christ. But is there the least Intimation of these Angels having superiority over other Ministers? What arguing is here? The Spirit writes to the *Angel of the Church of Ephesus*, therefore this *Angel* was a *Bishop*. And it is the Opinion of the ingenious Dr. *More*, the learned Mr. *Mede*, and of the great *Cocceius*, and many others, that these Epistles are prophetical of the State of the Church of Christ to the end of time; which they gather as from the Matter of the Epistles

* The Apostle *Paul* does seem to compare Angels to ordinary Ministers; for, speaking concerning Angels, he tells us, *they are all ministering Spirits, sent forth to minister to them, who shall be Heirs of Salvation*, *Heb.* i. 14. And is this resembling the Angels to Bishops, or to common Presbyters?

Epistles themselves, and many other things, so particularly, because our Lord bids *John* write the things which he had seen, which then were, and which were to come to pass in after-times; which they think plainly implies, that he did not only write of things that were then in being, but of things past, and things future; and they suppose the *Ephesian* State was just over, and that the Church was just entred upon the second State, viz. that of *Smyrna*, when St. *John* wrote the *Revelations*; which second State they suppose denotes those bloody Persecutions which the Church was under. I dare not pretend to determine in so difficult a case: But take it in what light you will, the Argument for Bishops Superiority to Presbyters, and their sole Right of Ordination, is altogether weak and inconclusive.

But *Timothy* and *Titus* seem to have had the Power of Ordination vested in them at *Ephesus* and *Crete*, tho' it is plain there were many *Presbyters* at *Ephesus*; and therefore surely, say our Brethren, *Presbyters* may not ordain: and *Timothy* is expressly called the first Bishop of the *Ephesians*, in the Postscript of the second Epistle to him: And *Titus* is also called the first Bishop of the Church of the *Cretians*, in the Postscript of the Epistle to him.

I answer, if by *Bishop* you do not mean a *Presbyter*, I see no reason to think *Timothy* or *Titus* were either of them *Bishops* at all. Had *Timothy* or *Titus* been either of them *Bishops*, can any think they would neither of them have been called so by the Apostle? And would not he, who thought it so needful to exhort the *Presbyters* to take heed to the Flock, and to perform their Office of Overseers as they were in Duty bound, have much more called upon them to perform the Office of *Bishops* well? as St. *Peter* calls upon the *Presbyters* to do,

1 Pet.

1 *Pet.* v. 1, 2. It does not appear, that either *Timothy* or *Titus* were *fixed Pastors* in any place, but there is abundant reason to judge the contrary.

As to *Timothy*, the learned *Dr. Whitby* * observes, that it is uncertain whether he was at *Ephesus* at the writing either of the Epistles to him, as he proves he was not when the second was written; and he says, that *Timothy* having done the Work for which he was to stay some time at *Ephesus*, he might go on to other places, doing the Work of an *Evangelist*, and settling ordinary Church Governours: And he says, there was little need that he should stay long at *Ephesus*, to do the great Work prescribed in this Epistle touching *Bishops* and *Deacons*, they being settled among them before *St. Paul* left *Ephesus*.

Now since this is evidently Matter of Fact, what reason is there to think he was a *fixed Bishop of the Church of Ephesus*, or any other particular Church whatsoever? Instead of finding him fixed in any one Church, we find him continually attending the Apostle *Paul* in his Travels; or if he sometimes left him behind at any place, charging him to make haste to come to him. *Vid. Acts* xvi. 1,—12. xvii. 14,—16. 2 *Tim.* iv. 9. At other times we find *Paul* sending him to diverse Churches with special Messages; thus he sent him to *Corinth*, 1 *Cor.* iv. 17. to *Thessalonica*, 1 *Thes.* iii. 2. And to the *Philippians*, as is generally thought; for *St. Paul* does as good as promise to do so, *Phil.* ii. 19. I might refer you to many other Scriptures which prove *Timothy* was an *Itinerant*, and therefore not a *fixed Bishop*, much less *Bishop of Ephesus*.

And as to *Titus*, much the same may be said of him; for we find him sometimes at *Corinth*,
2 *Cor.*

* *Vid.* Preface to this Epistle.

2 Cor. viii. 16, 17. Macedonia, 2 Cor. vii. 5, 6. Jerusalem, Gal. ii. 1—3. Dalmatia, 2 Tim. iv. 10. And in short, as if the Apostle would purposely inform us that *Titus* was no *fixed Bishop*, he tells us, if any enquire of *Titus* he was *his Partner and Fellow-helper concerning the Church*, 2 Cor. viii. 23. And it is evident, that he left him at *Crete* only for a *Season*; for he charges him to come to him to *Nicopolis*, where he *design'd to winter*: so that his stay at *Crete* was only to be about half a Year, *Tit.* iii. 12.

And as to the *Postscripts* to the *Epistles*, they are no part of Canonical Scripture: And the Observation of *Beza* upon them, that they were added by some *unlearned*, or very *inattentive Person*, is very just, and what every one may see the force of; for *Tit.* iii. 12. the Apostle bids *Titus* to come to him to *Nicopolis*, for ~~enē~~ THERE, not ~~ēē~~ HERE, I intend to winter; as it would have been, if he had written his Epistle from *Nicopolis* as the Postscript says. Mr. *Perkins*, in his Commentary on *Gal.* vi. proves at large, that all the Postscripts were added, by some private Persons long since the penning of Scripture. And one of the most antient Copies of the *Greek Bible* now extant has no other Postscripts to these Epistles than thus: *The second Epistle to Timothy was written from Laodicæa.* And the Postscript to *Titus*, is only, *It was written to Titus from Nicopolis.* And the learned *William Prynne Esq;* to whom I own myself indebted for much Information in this Matter, tells us, that the first Author in whom he could find these additional Clauses (ordained first Bishop of the *Ephesians*) and (ordained the first Bishop of the *Cretians*) is *Oecumenius*, who flourish'd about 1050 Years after the Birth of our Saviour. So that no Argument can be drawn from hence in favour of the Superiority of *Bishops* to *Presbyters*.

It appears then upon the whole, that *Timothy* and *Titus* were not *fixed*, and therefore not *Dio-cæsan Bishops*; but that they were *extraordinary Officers* in the Church; they were *Evangelists*, and very active Persons in the propagating the Gospel; and it was peculiarly proper to give them directions concerning the Ordination of Ministers, because as *Evangelists*, and *Itinerant Preachers*, they would be likely to bear a considerable part in the Ordination of Ministers in all the places, whither they went; but we have no intimation that they were to ordain any more *Orders of Ministers* any where besides *Bishops*, i. e. *Presbyters*, and *Deacons*: And let the strictest enquirer find out, any more than two sorts of standing Officers in the Church, spoke of in Scripture,

— *Et erit mihi Magnus Apollo.*

If Ministers then are still to be ordained, now extraordinary Officers are no more in the Church, they must be ordained by such as are in the Church, I mean *Presbyters*, or Scripture *Bishops*; and a number of such did, as my Text tells us, assist at *Timothy's* Ordination.

As to what some pretend of a *Succession* of *Dio-cæsan Bishops*, from the Apostolic times, and even while the Apostles lived, it seems to be defective as to any good evidence we have of it. There were doubtless in the Church then, as there are now some, who were men of extraordinary Abilities, some much more famous than others; and these (whose Names survived after their decease) were in the times of Degeneracy and Corruption, long after they were dead, advanced to I know not what *Bishopricks*, which themselves never dreamt of when alive; and when it happened that there had been two, or more, such famous Preachers in one Church

Church at the same time, those who afterwards dignified them with the Title of the *Bishops* of those Churches, knowing how fatal a Plurality of Bishops in the same Church was to their Scheme of Church-Power, made these good Men *Bishops* succeeding one another, in what order they saw fit: But now unhappily for them, as Truth is one uniform, consistent thing, so Falshood is often discover'd by its Inconsistency; so here these Men could not settle the *Order* in which they succeeded one another, and hence arises the difference between Church-Historians, about the Succession of *Linus*, *Cletus*, and *Anacletus* to the *Bishopric* of *Rome*, and of *Euodias*, and *Ignatius* to the See of *Antioch*, some giving the Precedence to one, and others to another; whereas, if you suppose them to be all *Presbyters* of equal Authority, with one another, and it may be many more in their respective Churches, this solves all the difficulty about the *Order* of their *Succession*: for as it is certain, they were cotemporary with one another, so is it most probable that they then kept close to Scripture, and were *common Presbyters* exercising the same Offices at the same time in those Churches with one another, no one assuming superiority over the rest.

3. Ordination by Imposition of Hands is most agreeable to Scripture-Precept, and Example. And there is but little need to offer much upon this head, because few, if any, who acknowledge that Ministers receive their Ministerial Investiture from other Ministers, refuse *Imposition of Hands*. But I shall just suggest to you what the Scripture presents us with on this head. Thus when Deacons were ordained, they had *Imposition of Hands*, *Acts* vi. 6. and that Imposition of Hands was not for the conferring extraordinary Gifts, for these Men were *full of the Holy Ghost* before, *ver. 3, 5*. When

Paul and Barnabas were separated to the Work for which God had called them, they had the Hands of Simeon Niger, Lucius, and Manaen, laid upon them, Acts xiii. 1, 2, 3. Timothy was ordained by the laying on of the Hands of the Apostle Paul, 2 Tim. i. 6. and the Text tells us, that it was not only St. Paul's Hands, but the Hands of the Presbytery that were laid on him at that time. And Timothy is bid not to lay hands suddenly on any, 1 Tim. v. 22. I shall add nothing more under this head, but the Words of the great Dr. John Owen, in his Exercitations on the Hebrews; who tells us, that as laying on of Hands was used in Scripture by way of authoritative Benediction, as Mark x. 16. (and I may add, when there was the prophesying of a Blessing, as Gen. xlviii. 14.) and when Diseases were miraculously healed, as Mark xvi. 18. Acts xxviii. 8. and in the conferring of extraordinary Gifts, Acts viii. 17. so in the setting apart Persons to the Office of the Ministry; and He cites Acts vi. 6. 1 Tim. iv. 14. 1 Tim. v. 22. to prove it; adding, that the Rite was derived from the Old Testament, Numb. viii. 10. where the Levites, in the day of their Consecration, had Hands laid upon them; and concerning Imposition of Hands on this occasion, the Doctor says, it is of standing Use in the Church, and that wherein Church-Order is much concerned.

Thus have I endeavoured to prove, that we are not now usurping an Office that does not belong to us, and have delivered the Truth as it appears to me, and I hope, in a manner, that cannot give any just ground of Offence; and tho' Controversy be a thing, which I have always thought the less of it is brought into the Pulpit, the better, yet upon such an Occasion it is needful to offer something in our own Vindication: And though we do not altogether think as our

Brethren in the Establishment, or as our Congregational Dissenting Brethren all of them do ; yet, blessed be God, these are not matters that affect the Foundation, and I shall ever rejoice in the Usefulness of good Ministers of Christ of every Denomination ; nor would I myself, and I persuade myself, neither do you my Brethren in the Ministry, confine your Supplications to any Party of Ministers, or Christians, but earnestly desire the Advancement of the Kingdom, and Interest of Christ, by the Conversion, and Salvation of Souls ; and that all who faithfully labour in the Word, and Doctrine, may have many Seals to their Ministry, many to be their Crown in the Day of the Lord.

IV. I am to suggest something concerning the neglecting the Gift that was in him, which the Apostle cautions *Timothy* against. And we then neglect the Gift that is in us, when we indulge to Sloth, and Idleness ; when instead of giving ourselves to Reading, Meditation, and Prayer, we prepare our Sermons only as Tasks, and do not take pains to furnish ourselves with useful Knowledge, but put our People off with crude indigested Stuff, instead of well-composed Discourses ; or when, instead of studying the pure Word of God, and those things that would be like to make our Hearers better Christians, we, on the one hand, harangue them with Philosophical Disputations, or Discourses, that have nothing Evangelical in them, studiously leaving out the Peculiarities of the Gospel : Or, on the other hand, when we are almost always treating upon Speculations, which we fancy we see some Foundation for in the Gospel, but are to be sure of less importance ; and yet we, out of a Fondness of such things, seldom make the great Points of Practical Godliness the Subjects

Subjects of our Sermons. Here how might I enlarge, speaking to myself, and you my Brethren, and how much more needful is it for all of us to be stirred up to beware of Negligence in our Work, than it was for *Timothy*? But I remember this Work is in better hands, and we shall presently hear in a more judicious manner than I could pretend to represent, how we ought all of us to behave, that we may approve ourselves faithful in this Work.

I close therefore with a few Reflections.

1. If we think, that in Matters of Church-Order, and the Rituals of Religion, we ought to keep close to the Word of God, how much more should we do so in the plain Duties of Religion? My Brethren, with what face can we pretend to dissent from the Establishment, alledging as a Reason that we think there is elsewhere a nearer Conformity to the Gospel, in things which we profess are only of less Importance; and yet dare to live in any course of Sin whatever? Let Piety, and Holiness of Heart, and Life, be that, which, in a peculiar manner, we desire to distinguish ourselves by; let our Faith work by Love, and let our Integrity, and Goodness in all the Branches of it, show that we are concerned to keep Consciences void of Offence towards God, and towards all Men.

2. Tho' in all we do in Religion, we ought to be fully persuaded in our own minds; let us not be uncharitable, and censorious towards our Fellow-Christians, from whom we see cause to dissent. How much better would it have been with the Church of Christ, if the Spirit of the Gospel had prevailed more among the Professors of Christianity? It is sad to think how many that call themselves by the name of the meek, and lowly Jesus, whose Patience under the greatest Indignities, is a divine

Pattern

Pattern for our Imitation; yet are so far from treading in his steps, that they are for *calling for Fire from Heaven to consume* those who cannot exactly assent to all they require of them to believe. But if angry Men will anathematize you, my Brethren; if they will pronounce your Opinions (I will not call them Errors) damnable, do not you imitate them, *You have not so learned Jesus*; when others *revile*, and *curse*, do you *bless*, and *do good to them that despitefully use you, and persecute you, and you shall be the Children of your Father who is in Heaven*. And if, at any time, you find your angry Passions boil merely upon the account of different Sentiments, remember your differing Brother has exactly as much to bear with you in, for that reason, as you have to bear with him in: And if the Matter be not a Fundamental in Religion, think, how firmly soever I may believe I am in the right, the thing is possible that it may be I, and not He, that is in the mistake; and especially may this be so, where the difference is about trifling things.

3. Let Christians bless God for a Gospel-Ministry, and pray for the Continuance of it. You ought to look upon it, as I before observed, to be a valuable Gift from God; prize it then as a Blessing, own it as wonderful Goodness, that God has not yet *removed his Candlestick out of its place*, but we still are favour'd with the Light of the glorious Gospel. *Our Eyes still see our Teachers*, there is still an *open Vision*, our Ministers are not forced to abscond into Corners, but we have the Gospel preached in the greatest Purity; let us bless God for so great a Benefit, and let us humbly beseech him not to deprive us of so great and invaluable a Privilege.

4. How careful should Ministers be, not to do any thing that should bring their Office into Contempt? A scandalous Minister is a Reproach to
our

our holy Religion ; He gives the Redeemer wounds in the House of his Friends. If all Christians are to walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the Time ; how fit in a peculiar manner is it that Ministers should do so, avoiding all corrupt Communication, all——foolish talking, and jestings which are not convenient ; and endeavour to roll away a too common, but I hope often unjust Reproach, that our Hearers should do as we say, not as we do ?

5. Let Ministers and People have their Eye continually towards the great Shepherd of the Sheep : Let us remember he *laid down his Life for the Sheep*, and has *purchased them with his own Blood*. He is your great Lord, and Head ; we are acting for him, and would be glad to *feed his Sheep, and Lambs* : But both we and you should bear it on our Minds, that He who purchased all the Blessings of the New Covenant for you, can alone effectually apply them to you, by the powerful Influences of his Spirit, and Grace : and though we should be ever so painful, and laborious in our Work, unless *the Arm of the Lord be revealed*, none will *believe our Report*. Let us then *strive together in our Prayers to Him* for each other, and so we may hope that our preaching, and your hearing, shall neither of them be in vain : And *may the God of Peace, who brought again from the Dead the Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the Blood of the everlasting Covenant make you perfect in every good Work to do his Will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight thro' Jesus Christ, to whom be Glory, and everlasting Praises ! Amen.*





A

Confession of FAITH, &c.

WHEN I take a Survey of this visible Creation, and seriously reflect on the several Objects which therein do continually offer themselves to our View, I cannot suppose this World, and the Things therein contained, to be independent; since nothing can cause it self to exist. I must therefore conclude, that there is one supreme Being, who is independent, and upon whom all Things do depend for their Existence: And this great Being is GOD.

I believe, That this God is infinite in every Perfection, and that his eternal Glory and Excellency are such, as cannot, by any means, be increased or diminished. He cannot possibly be subject to any Changes, being the same *from everlasting to everlasting*^a, *without any Variableness, or even Shadow of turning*^b. His Presence cannot be excluded from any Place, neither can any thing, past, present, or future, be concealed from him, but all things are perfectly known by him; he is unsearchable in his Wisdom, and of almighty Power; and his strict Justice, his unspotted Purity and Holiness, and his boundless Goodness, are such as cannot

D be

^a Psalm xc. 2.^b James i. 17.

be express'd by Words, nor fully conceived of in our very Thoughts.

As I believe there is a GOD, and one possess'd of such Perfections, so I believe there can be but one such. For though the Manner of his Existence is far above our Conceptions, yet it is what belongs solely to him; since there can be but one possess'd, in such a degree, of such divine Perfections. I therefore conclude, that there is but One only, the living and true God.

I believe, That this GOD did at first give Being to the whole Creation; and that, when he created them, there was not any Defect in them, but they were *all very good*^c.

I believe, That this GOD, by his all-wise Providence, does govern the whole Creation. He, as Lord of these Worlds, sets bounds to his Creatures, beyond which he will not suffer them to pass: And as he is the Governor of all, so he over-rules all things in such a way, as may answer his own Designs, and advance his own Glory.

I believe, That GOD created two Ranks of Beings, Angels and Men, whom he endowed with Powers and Faculties superior to the rest of his Creatures; That they were both of them at first holy and happy, though not without a Possibility of falling from that State.

I believe, That Angels having been for some time in a State of Probation, those of them who kept their Integrity and Holiness, were, by their Creator, confirmed therein; and that those who kept not their first State, but apostatized, are, upon the account of their Disobedience and Rebellion, reserved in everlasting Chains, under Darkness, unto the Judgment of the Great Day^d.

I be-

^c Genesis i. 31.

^d Jude 6.

I believe, That Man was at first created after the Image of God himself; and that when God *breathed into him the Breath of Life, he became thereby a living Soul^e*; which Spirit of his, being of an immaterial and immortal nature, has no Tendency to Corruption.

I believe, That when GOD created Man, he put him into a State of Probation, to make trial of his Obedience; to this end, he *forbad him to eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil^f*, threatening the greatest Evils, in case of Transgression: But though he was created in a State of Purity and Integrity, and had Power sufficient to have continued in it, yet, being left to act according to his own Will, he gave way to the Temptations of the wicked one, and so sinned against GOD.

I believe, That *Adam* was appointed as the Head of all his Posterity; and therefore, as he sinned and fell from his first State, so all that descended from him, by ordinary Generation, sinned in him, and fell with him. *Thus, by one Man's Disobedience, many were made Sinners^g*. And we cannot but see the Effects of this first Sin, in that Prone-ness that appears in all Mankind, to walk in sinful Ways, and the Delight which they naturally take therein. The Will and Affections are strongly bi-^ass'd to things of a sensible nature; all the Powers and Faculties of the Soul seem to be disordered, and put out of their proper Course; and Man has, in a great Degree, lost not only his Likeness to his Creator, in which he was at first formed, but his Ability also to yield Obedience to him, and to discharge those Duties which he requires of him.

And, as this is the Case, I believe, That it is not possible that Man should obtain Happiness, by means of that Covenant which God made
D 2 with

^e Genesis ii. 7.

^f Genesis ii. 17.

^g Romans vii. 19.

with *Adam*, in his State of Innocency, or by Obedience to that Law which God then gave him ; and therefore, if God had any gracious Designs towards him, of bringing him to everlasting Happiness, it was necessary that some Information should be given him, by what means it might be obtained ; for this could never be known but by a divine Revelation.

I believe, That the holy Scriptures are a Revelation of the Mind and Will of God ; and that all things which are contained in the Books of the Old and New Testament, are of divine Original : And am fully convinced, that they ought to be regarded by us, as a perfect and sufficient Rule of Faith and Practice ; and therefore, think it very unbecoming, and an Instance of great Presumption, for any to put those things, which are only of human Authority, upon a Level therewith.

And, as I believe thus concerning the Holy Scripture ; so, upon the Authority thereof, I do also believe, That *there are Three that bear Record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost^h* ; and that, though these are distinguished by some personal Properties, yet they are equal in all divine Perfections ; and are the one, true, eternal God.

I believe, That as God did, from Eternity, foresee that Man would sin against him, and thereby expose his whole Race to eternal Misery ; he did even then provide a Means for his Salvation. To this end did the Son of God, the second Person in the ever-blessed Trinity, engage to take upon him our Nature, and so to accomplish this great Work.

And as God had, from Eternity, these gracious Designs concerning his Creatures, so I believe, That, as soon as Man had, by Sin, exposed him-
self

self to everlasting Misery, God did give him some Intimation of his designed Goodness, promising, that one should be raised up, who should counteract all the Devices of Man's greatest Enemy, and should bring about the expected Deliverance. And as God had made such a Promise, which was not immediately fulfilled, so he did frequently give forth Predictions concerning this Messiah or Saviour who should come; thereby giving his People new Encouragement, to wait in the Exercise of Faith, for the Accomplishment of this great Promise.

I believe, That, when *the Fulness of Time was come, God did send forth his Son, made of a Woman, made under the Lawⁱ*: He who was, from Eternity, the Son of God, *the Brightness of his Father's Glory, and the express Image of his Person^k*, condescended to appear in the Form of a Servant; *he humbled himself, and became obedient unto Death, even the Death of the Cross^l*; and, by what he did and suffered, did make full Satisfaction to the Justice of God, that we, who were Sinners, might be delivered from going down to the Pit, by means of the Ransom he had found for us. *He was thus delivered for our Offences, and raised again for our Justification^m*.

I believe, That our great Mediator and Redeemer has, by his active and passive Obedience, procured all necessary good things for Sinners; and, that these shall be bestowed upon all that will receive him as a Saviour: And, tho' the Law required perfect sinless Obedience, as a Term of Life, yet, according to the Tenor of the Gospel-Covenant, every believing Penitent, being sincerely and heartily devoted to the Service of God, and such only, have an Interest in his Righteousness: Which
Righte-

ⁱ Galat. iv. 4. ^k Heb. i. 3. ^l Phil. ii. 8. ^m Rom. iv. 25.

Righteousness of his, is the alone meritorious Cause of our obtaining the Blessings of this Covenant; though our Faith, Repentance, and sincere Obedience, are Qualifications indispensibly necessary to our Interest in them.

I believe, That there is a certain Number of Men, who shall assuredly be made Partakers of the great Salvation which Christ has purchased; because the Scripture speaks of some, whom *God had chosen in Christ, before the Foundation of the World, that they should be holy, and without Blame, before him, in Loveⁿ*. But though God has thus displayed his Grace, in favour of some of his Creatures, more than others, in securing their eternal Salvation; yet, since he has, in his Word, declared his great Willingness to accept of all who will embrace his Proposals of Grace and Mercy, and has given such Invitations to Sinners in general, making Offers of Grace and Salvation, to all who sit under the Sound of the Gospel, I believe, that there is no Decree of his, whereby he has made the Misery, much less the Sin of any, inevitable.

I believe, That, by reason of the Fall of our first Parents, all the Powers of our Souls are greatly vitiated and depraved; so that there is an absolute Necessity of the Spirit of God, to quicken us, and to work effectually upon us: And that, without this, Sinners would never come unto Christ, as a Saviour. And, by reason of the Corruption of our Nature becoming habitual, it is become impossible for us to perform any thing that might be acceptable unto God, without the Assistance of his Grace: And therefore, *except a Man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God^o*.

I believe, That all those who are thus renewed in the Spirit of their Minds, and are willing to submit

ⁿ Ephes. i. 4.

^o John iii. 3.

mit unto Christ, as their Saviour, shall be justified freely by the Grace of God, through the Redemption which is in Christ Jesus^p! For whose sakes, Believers are accepted as righteous in the sight of God: but though we are justified by Faith, and not by the merit of our own Works, yet I believe that good Works and Holiness are absolutely necessary in order to Salvation.

I believe, That there are and will be Remainders of Sin and Corruption, even in the best of Men, while in this World; so that we all need continual Supplies of Grace, to help us to mortify our Corruptions, and to enable us to overcome them. These Supplies all sincere Christians may hope for and expect; and that they shall hereby be enabled to persevere in the way of Holiness: yet there is no ground for any to expect this, but those who continue in the use of those means which God has appointed.

I believe, That God's appointed Means of Grace, in the use of which we may hope for these Mercies, are devout and fervent Prayer to him, a diligent Attendance upon his Word, and that we duly engage in those other Ordinances which he has appointed; particularly the Sacraments, which he hath instituted as Seals of the New Covenant.

I believe, That the Sacraments of the New Testament are Baptism and the Lord's Supper; the former of which is, that whereby we are initiated into the Church of Christ; and is to be administered to such adult Persons, as from being Strangers to the Christian Religion, are brought to make a Profession of it: and as the Infants of those who already believe are to be looked upon as Members of the Christian Church, they have also a Right to this Ordinance. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is what we are also required frequently to attend upon,

upon, in commemoration of the Death of Christ, which is by our eating Bread and drinking Wine, plainly shewn forth therein; and, as sincere Christians, do hereby give up themselves to God to be his Servants, they may also put in a claim to all the Blessings of the New Covenant.

I believe, That the Means of Grace are to be dispensed by such Persons, and such only, as are duly qualified for, and called to this Service, according to the direction of God's Word; and that no others should presume to engage in such Work. And it ought to be looked upon by us as a great Mercy, that our Lord has taken care to establish a Gospel-Ministry in his Church; and that he does incline the Hearts of some Persons, to lay aside all secular Business, and to give up themselves to that Work, which so immediately tends to his Honour, and to the Good of Souls.

I believe, That it *is appointed for all Men once to die, and after that the Judgment^a; that there is no Man that liveth who shall not see Death^r*: And that, at Death, tho' the Bodies of Men do return to their Dust, their Souls shall exist in a separate state of Happiness or Misery, till the second Appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ: then shall all those who *sleep in the Dust of the Earth awake^s, they shall hear the Voice of the Son of God, and come forth^t*; their Souls shall then be re-united to their Bodies, and shall together be summoned to appear before the Tribunal of the great Judge.

I believe, That then shall be *that Day which God has appointed, wherein he will judge the World in Righteousness by Jesus Christ^u*; who shall then appear in his Father's Glory^x, attended by all the heavenly Host; then shall all Nations be gathered together before him; and shall have the Sentence
passed

^a Heb. ix. 27. ^r Psal. 89. 46. ^s Dan. xii. 2. ^t John v. 28, 29

^u Acts xvii. 31. ^x Matth. xxv. 31.

passed upon them, according to what they have done in the Body, whether it be good or whether it be evil. He will then make a Separation between the righteous and the wicked, between them that feared God, and them that feared him not. As for those who have lived in Sin, and have neglected and despised his Gospel, and the great Salvation which it offers; he will look with Anger upon them, and sentence them to receive the just Desert of their Sins; Confusion and Horror shall cover their faces; and there shall be no escaping his Wrath and Indignation: But they shall be cast into eternal Torments, *and punished with everlasting Destruction from the Presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of his Power*^y. But the Righteous shall be regarded with an Eye of Favour, they shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted by him; they shall be entirely freed from all Sin and Defilement, and made perfectly blessed in the full and everlasting Enjoyment of that God, *in whose Presence is Fulness of Joy; and at whose Right-hand there are Pleasures for evermore*^z.

^y 2 Theff. i. 9.

^z Psalm xvi. 11.





T H E EXHORTATION.

My Dear Brother in Christ,

YOU having desired the Office and good Work of a Bishop; have, according to Scripture-rule and order, given proof of your gifts and qualifications, by submitting to examination, before those who are the only proper Judges of ministerial Abilities, and have been approved.

You have this day witnessed a good Confession before this Church of God, and many other Witnesses, declaring it to be your sincere desire and purpose, by the help of God, to devote yourself entirely to sacred Services, and to continue therein to the end of life.

And you have hereupon been solemnly set apart, and ordained to the Work of the Ministry, as an Elder, Evangelist or Preacher, by Fasting, Prayer, and the Laying on of the Hands of the Presbytery; and have been chosen by this Church to preside over them in all divine Offices, as their Bishop or Pastor. I would therefore, as one that desires to be faithful, put both you and myself in mind of those solemn Engagements we are laid under by our Ordination Vows; and would particularly lay before you the *Duties* and *Discouragements*, that attend the sacred Office, and the strong *Encouragements* the Gospel gives, bravely to bear up against all Oppositions.

Saint *Paul*, that zealous and faithful Minister of Jesus, having, together with other Presbyters, ordained *Timothy* an Evangelist and Preacher, left him at *Ephesus*, to instruct and establish the new Converts there, whilst he travelled into other Parts to spread the Gospel. In his Travels he wrote his *first Epistle* to him, to direct and instruct him in the Management of the important Trust, and amongst other advices, gives him this,

CHAP. iv. v. 16.

Take heed unto thyself, and unto thy Doctrine, continue in them: for in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee. i. e. Seeing thou art intrusted with such a Charge, a Business of so great importance, take heed unto thy self, and to thy life, that it be sober and exemplary; and to thy Doctrine, that what thou preacheest be according to the Scriptures: and be constant and unwearied in thy Work; and in so doing thou shalt, by the blessing of God accompanying thy labours, both save thyself, and many others that may attend thy Ministry.

Some years after, being a Prisoner at *Rome* for the testimony of Jesus, he wrote to the Church of God at *Coloss*, planted there by the Ministry of *Epaphras*, to congratulate them upon their receiving the Gospel, and to establish them in the Faith of Christ. And in the close of the Epistle gives this advice;

CHAP. iv. v. 17.

And say to Archippus, Take heed to the Ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it. i. e. Let *Archippus*, your Minister and Pastor, know, that this is my advice to him, That, as he has been intrusted with the Office of the Ministry by the will of God, and according to the appointment of the Lord Christ, it is incumbent on him to be very careful and diligent to fulfil it, and to

perform all the Duties and Offices of it, with great Zeal and Fidelity.

On these two Texts I shall ground the *Exhortation*, which, at your request, I am at this time to give you. And I shall,

First, Lay before you some parts of that *Duty*, which is incumbent on you, as a Person devoted to God in sacred Ministrations.

Then, point at some of those *Difficulties* you must expect to meet in the faithful discharge of your Office ; and,

Lastly, Offer some Considerations, by way of *Encouragement* to you, to go on cheerfully in the discharge of your Trust, notwithstanding any Oppositions.

I. I am to lay before you some of those things that are necessarily incumbent on you as a Minister of the Gospel of Christ.

And this I shall do under these two heads ;

First, Take heed to your *self*.

Secondly, Take heed to your *Ministry*.

1. Take heed to your *self* ; both to your *Heart*, and to your *Life*. Great care should be taken of both, if you would fulfil and adorn your Ministry.

(1.) It is not possible you should be a good Christian, much less a good Minister, except you set a strict watch over your *Heart*.

The Heart is the fountain from whence all the streams of action flow, which run through the life ; and as that is pure or corrupt, so will they be.

I am persuaded you have been at some pains to know your own Heart. And *as* you have made a profession of sincere intentions, in taking upon you

you this sacred Employment, *so* a frequent inspection into your Heart is needful, that no evil Habit take root, or grow up there. As it is necessary you should be a *Christian*, before you be a *Minister*; so the work of a Christian will be still incumbent on you, one part of which, is, to be often reviewing the heart, the inward frame and workings of the mind, in order to know whether the purposes are sincere, the aims and ends pure and upright. This advice the wise man, taught by a divine Spirit, gives, saying, *Keep thy heart with all diligence*; and enforceth it with this strong reason, *for out of it are the issues of life**; i. e. As the Heart is the fountain of the natural life, as from thence issue those streams that give motion, health, and life to the whole body; so is the Soul the fountain of the rational life, and from thence issue those desires, affections, and passions, as bring on either its life or death, its endless happiness, or everlasting ruin; and therefore is it necessary that it be watched over with a strict eye, and be kept in with a strong hand.

You are made by the appointment of Jesus, and the choice of this People ||, *the Keeper of another's Vineyard*: but you are not therefore to neglect *the keeping of your own*. God has this day made you a *Watchman* in his holy City, his Church, *to watch over other's souls*†: but you are not to be careless of your own soul.

Whilst you are endeavouring to instil divine knowledge, or to increase virtue, grace, and goodness in others, be not unconcerned whether you cultivate these in your own soul or not; but if you recommend any christian grace to your Hearers, ask yourself, Is my own heart replenished with this divine affection? Am not I herein deficient and wanting?

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* Prov. iv. 23. || Cant. i. 6. † Ezek. xxiii. 7.

A knowledge of your own Heart will help you greatly in your work. Without it you may speak to the *ears* of men, but you will seldom reach their *hearts*. If you have not a relish of those sacred truths you deliver to others, you will deliver them with great coldness and indifference; but a sacred flame of divine love, love to God, and love to the souls of men, in your own breast, will inspire you with life and zeal in your Ministrations, and will make you more solicitous to say that which may *profit*, than that which may *please*; more desirous to promote their *Salvation*, than to gain their *Applause*.

Take heed to *Conscience*, to get it duly enlightened, and then to keep it pure and tender. Let no temptations of great Titles, worldly Honours, and large Revenues, draw you into any unlawful compliances, to the wounding of your own mind. If they should, which God forbid! you may stop your ears to its admonitions in a day of prosperity; but in a day of adversity it will severely reprove, and its rebukes and wrongs will lie heavy upon the soul, and ruin all hopes of usefulness and acceptance.

But if you are careful to preserve a good Conscience, and to obey its dictates, it will be a strong support, and afford a mighty joy under any difficulties or trials you may meet with; for *he that hath a good Conscience*, hath a continual feast*.

Be often enquiring after your *Proficiency* in the divine life, that you may know the state of your own soul; for until all the christian Characters are fair and legible upon the table of your own heart, your work will go on but heavily, and you will address to others upon the same subjects with little life and vigour. Therefore frequently commune with your own heart, and keep up daily communion with your God, in all the parts of secret worship.

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Let not family-worship, nor your preparations for publick service, hinder your daily closet-devotions. And because these will sometimes be but short and general, if therefore you now and then set apart a larger portion of time, for a more exact search into your own soul, for a more solemn Repentance and Humiliation before God, for a more particular review of yourself and Ministry, and for a more earnest supplication to the Almighty, for his Blessing on yourself and on your labours, you will find your account in it.

2. Take heed to your life. Thus the Apostle exhorts his beloved *Timothy**, *Let no man despise thy youth, but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.* Christ's Ministers are compared to *salt*, and to *light*†; as they are to be pure themselves, and to preserve others so; and *are to let their light of holiness so shine before men, that others seeing their good works may glorify God their heavenly Father*‡. Let all the virtues and graces you recommend from the pulpit to others, be transcribed in your own soul, and shine forth visibly in your life.

How sharp and cutting must the reflection be, to say of any one, "He recommends to others by his preaching, what he don't like to practise himself;—he gives fine descriptions of virtue, and commends her beauty, but he takes his leave at the Church-door, and refuseth to walk in her ways?" With what an ill grace do men press those truths or duties on others, which their practice shews they have no love or relish for? Who can be serious in hearing, what they know another is not serious in speaking?

There is no being an approved Minister, without being a good man. The most correct and laboured preaching will be rendered ineffectual by a bad

* 1 Tim. iv. 12. † Matt. v. 13, 14. ‡ Ver. 16.

bad life. And they who have no love for serious godliness, nor any regard to the practice of it, and yet take upon them to instruct and preach to others, are the greatest curse to a nation, and lead men to Infidelity and Atheism : And the Almighty will one day say to every such Preacher, with a voice that will make their guilty souls to tremble, *What hast thou to do to declare my statutes? Or that thou shouldst take my covenant into thy mouth? seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee*?*

If then you desire to be a Blessing to this People, or to any other where the Providence of God may call you to minister, and not a Curse, take heed to your life; *Holding the mystery of faith in a pure Conscience†; keeping a Conscience void of offence, both towards God, and towards men; and having your conversation in simplicity and godly sincerity, not according to fleshly wisdom, but according to the grace of God manifested in the Gospel.* Be a Preacher of Righteousness in life and example. *Be clothed with Humility. Let your Moderation be known unto all men. Endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. And above all, put on Charity, which is the very bond of perfectness. Give no offence to the Church of God; but walk circumspectly in wisdom towards all, that the Ministry be not blamed.* As God has placed you at the head of a family, see that you be conscientious in the discharge of all *relative duties.* Let all under your care be the better both for your Instruction and Example; and walk before your family with a perfect heart. In life adorn that holy doctrine which you profess, and recommend from the pulpit: that if any shall accuse your good conversation in Christ, they may be ashamed, and you have joy in the great day of the Lord.

2. You must take heed, not only to your *self*, but to your *Ministry*. It is a *Ministry which*, we trust,

* Psal. l. 16, 17. † 1 Tim. iii. 9.

trust, *you have received in the Lord*; as his Grace ⁷ has inclined your heart to it, as he has bestowed on you very considerable gifts to fit you for it, as his Providence has opened your way for the exercise of those gifts, and as you have now been solemnly invested with it, according to his Institution, and the rule of his Gospel, that is, *by fasting, prayer, and the laying on of hands*. But you are to remember, it is a *Ministry** you have received; though it be a good and an honourable Office, yet it is so, only as it is a Ministry or Service; and they who would separate the *honour* from the *service*, and assume the *one*, whilst they neglect the *other*, are worthy of neither.

But whilst some are courting and eagerly pursuing all the honours and high titles of *Ecclesiastical Heraldry*, and the rich emoluments belonging to it, be you only ambitious of deserving the honourable title of, *a Servant of the Churches for Jesus sake*, and to recommend yourself, by diligent and useful labours, to his approbation; and it will be honour enough, and you shall obtain at last a rich and glorious recompence of reward.

And you must take heed, both to your *Preparations* for your Ministry, and to your *Discharge* of it.

1. Take heed to your *private Preparations* for your more publick work. Dare not to neglect all preparations for the Pulpit, under pretence of having your dependance on immediate divine Assistances. Some have done so; I fear, through sloth and laziness, and I am sure with a bold and groundless presumption. Dare not to serve the Lord with that which costs you nothing. You are to devote your whole self, and your whole time to this service, and not one day in the seven only. Be daily

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laying in and increasing Knowledge, by *Reading, Meditation, and Prayer.*

(1.) By *Reading*. Let the sacred Volumes be daily in your hands; both for the improvement of your own Heart, and for the fitting you for your publick, and private Work, as a Minister. These are the Fountains of divine and useful Knowledge; and *Divinity* is now to be your chief Study. Esteem other Writings, according as they tend to increase your Knowledge of the inspired Scriptures, or to confirm their divine Original and Authority. Fear not to acquaint your self with the Controversies of the Day, that you may *be established in the present Truth*, and better qualified to guard those under your care, against the subtle Devices of such as seek to turn them away from the Simplicity and Purity of the Gospel. The Christian Religion is not ashamed of the Light, nor the great and important Truths of it ashamed of the fullest and strictest Examination. But be most conversant with the best practical Writings. These will have the greatest Influence on your own Heart, and will afford you the best Furniture for instructing the People in their various Circumstances, to their Comfort and Edification. Was *Timothy* exhorted to give attendance to reading? So should you*. Had an inspired Apostle his Books†? You must not think to do without them.

(2.) Join *Meditation* to your reading. There is a cursory way of reading Books, which some accustom themselves to, that is of little profit. One Volume read with Attention, and Judgment, and with some short Extracts, will give you more Light, and more increase your Knowledge, than many in the cursory way. Meditation will fix what you read upon your Mind, and make it your own; it will free you from a contracted way of thinking, and
inlarge

* 1 Tim. iv. 13.

† 2 Tim. iv. 13.

inlarge your Thoughts and Conceptions, and improve your Judgment. Especially in composing for the Pulpit; weigh your Subject well; consider it in different views and lights, and fix upon that Method, that is most natural, easy and edifying.

(3.) Add to Meditation *Prayer*. Be *much* in Prayer; and be *fervent* in Prayer. Without this you will go on but heavily in your Work. It is by Prayer, that you must fetch in those Supplies of Light and Strength from above, as must fit you for your daily Work, and make you successful in it. When *Moses* came down from the Mount, where he had been conversing with God, a Glory sat upon his Countenance, which filled the Beholders with Awe and Wonder*. So you, by going often up into the Mount of Prayer, and conversing with God in that holy Exercise, will contract a Lustre on the Face of your Soul, and receive that Light and Unction from above, that is necessary to lead you into all Truth, and fit you for every Part of your sacred Office: Your Conversation and your Preaching, will both savour of the heavenly World, and shew that you have been with God.

2. Take heed to your *Discharge* of the sacred Trust you have received, and that you *fulfil* your Ministry. And there are some Parts of your Work, as a Minister, that are of a *publick*, and some that are of a *private* nature.

(1.) Some Parts of your Office are of a *publick* nature, and belong to the House of God. And here,

1.) Let me recommend to you, as one part of your publick Work on the Lord's Day, *Expounding the Scripture*, at least once in the Day. You will find some considerable Advantages attending the Practice, both to your self and others. By studying a larger Portion of Scripture than in Preaching, you will be master of the sense of it,

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* Exod. xxxiv. 30.

and it will be your own ever after. And then, such a Variety in the Work never fails of pleasing an Auditory, and you will find them grow the faster in the most useful Scripture-knowledge, which will be their benefit, and your joy and honour.

2. *As to Preaching*, take heed both *What*, and *How* you preach.

(1.) Take heed to the *Matter* of your Discourse, or *What* you preach. *Being made a Minister, according to the dispensation of God, you are to fulfil the Word of God**: and to reveal his whole counsel; keeping back nothing that may be profitable; neither what may truly exalt the rich Grace of God, nor what may lead to Holiness of Life, and a Gospel-conversation.

Avoid, as much as may be, *Points of Controversy*, as what amuse and perplex the Hearers, but do not edify them. Make not the Pulpit a Chair of Disputation. Controversies will lead them off from practical Religion, and eat out the Vitals of serious Godliness. If your Subject be such as has been controverted in the Schools, (as what part of sacred Theology has not?) discourse on it in a plain scriptural way, without informing them of all the Objections that have been raised against it.

If you discourse on any *speculative*, or any *deep Points* in Divinity, still let it be with a view to *Practice*: shew them the influence it ought to have upon their Lives, and how it leads to Gospel-holiness; or, according to the Expression of one of the most useful Preachers in our day, "Preach free Grace practically, and good Works evangelically."

Insist much on *the great and distinguishing Points of Christianity*, by which it differs from the Law and Religion of Nature. You are a Minister of *Jesus*, and must glory in his *Cross*, and preach his *Gospel*; Yea, woe unto you, if you preach not the Gospel.

* Colos. i. 25.

Gospel. You must make him known in all his sacred Characters, and glorious Undertakings for sinful Men. Let all your Discourses, if possible, have some reference to him. If you speak of the Perfections of the Deity, shew how they shine forth in his Son. If of Providence; tell them, that *all Power both in Heaven and in Earth is put into Jesus hands*; that *he is made Head over all things to his Church*, and *that he is appointed to be the great Judge of the World, at the last Day*. Or if you speak of the sad depravity of the human Nature, from thence take occasion to shew Men the necessity of a Saviour, and endeavour to lead them to him. Or, if you discourse of moral Virtues, such as, *Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness, and Temperance*; recommend them from the Example of Christ, as Testimonies of gratitude to him, and as *the Fruits of that Holy Spirit* *, which he hath purchased for us, and given to us. Was the Knowledge of Christ what the great Apostle so highly esteemed, *accounting all things else as dross in comparison of it*? Did he glory in the way of Salvation by him? And did he deliberately resolve and *determine to know*, or make known, *nothing amongst his Hearers, so much as Christ, and him crucified* †. Imitate the great and excellent Example, and *travail as in Birth, till Christ be formed in the hearts of your Hearers* ||.

And as the way of a Sinner's acceptance with a pure and holy God, through the Mediation of the blessed Jesus, is *one* great Truth peculiar to the Gospel-revelation, so *another* is, the way in which we are to receive those *divine Assistances*, that are necessary for the performing the whole of Christian Duty, and by which we may triumph over the Assaults of Satan, the Temptations of the World, our own corrupt Flesh, and all the Powers of

Darkness.

* Gal. v. 22, 23. † 1 Cor. ii. 2. || Gal. iv. 19.

Darkness. As it was necessary that there should be an *Atonement for Sin*, in order to the Sinner's acceptance; so a *divine Power* is as necessary to enlighten, purify, and renew the mind. These two great Doctrines run quite through the Gospel, and are clearly and fully revealed there. When therefore you have been endeavouring to convince of Sin, lead the sincere Penitent to *Jesus*, the great *Propitiation*: And, when pressing to Duty, shew the humble Christian where his *Strength* lies, and the great Encouragement the Gospel gives to ask of God his *Holy Spirit*, to assist in every difficulty, and carry through every danger.

Direct the *Christian Practice*. Lay open the whole Compass of Duty, and *divide the Word of God aright*, so as to give every one, Sinners and Saints, their proper Portion in due season. Convince the former of the necessity of *being born again*, in the Gospel sense, of the necessity of *Repentance*, and *Faith in Jesus*, and of having a *Relish* for Piety and real Holiness, in order to their being happy. Display the *Terrors of the Lord*, for the awakening the secure and presumptuous, and the *Compassions of a God*, for the alluring and encouraging the young and the fearful. Shew the Saints of God the great and absolute necessity there is, *That they who believe in Jesus maintain good Works*; *That they depart from iniquity*; and *that they have their Conversations as becometh the Gospel*: For that hereby, their heavenly Father is glorified, the Redeemer's Honour advanced, and the Religion they profess recommended to others, and made visible and lovely. Sometimes make particular Addresses to several sorts of Persons, to the old, and to the young, to the careless and secure, and to the fearful and doubting; to the weak, and to the strong; to the Babes in Christ, and to those of full stature.

In a word, all political, State-affairs, and all Party-disputes, by which Christians are divided amongst themselves, are too mean for the Pulpit. You have much more important Concerns to treat of: As a Minister of Jesus, you are to preach his Gospel, and endeavour to save Mens Souls.

(2.) You must have a regard to the *Manner* of Preaching, if you desire to be an acceptable and useful Preacher.

The greatest and most useful Truths may be rendered unprofitable and contemptible, by obscurity, by meanness of style, or by want of seriousness in him that delivers them. To avoid which,

Endeavour to be *plain* and *intelligible*. The great Truths of the Gospel, that are most necessary to Salvation, and consequently ought to be most frequently insisted on, are expressed in the holy Writings with a most *beautiful Simplicity*; they need no Embellishments of Language. All the Ornaments with which other meaner Thoughts are dressed up, would but obscure their Beauties: They shine brightest with their own Lustre. There is a Greatness, a true Sublimity, and a noble Majesty, in the glorious and important Truths of our Religion, vastly excelling all meerly human Comlosures.

Avoid then all affected Turns of Wit, as what tend to make Men merry, rather than serious; and let your Manner be agreeable to the Dignity of your Subject.

Again, add *Heat* to *Light*. A fine Writer of the *French* Nation saith, "The Preacher is to imitate God in his Action upon the Heart of a Sinner, which he first enlightens, and then enlivens with his Grace; and thus subdues it."

'Tis a great disadvantage to the important Truths of the Christian Religion, when they are delivered with coldness, as if they were trifling or indifferent things. When a Man reads his Sermon with as
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little Life and Ardour as if it was a News-paper, it is a sad Disappointment to the just Expectation of the pious Hearer. Such a Preacher can scarce expect to raise any considerable Warmth, or Fervour in others, when these are so greatly wanting in himself. If ever it become a Man to be serious, and in earnest, it is most certainly in the Pulpit.

“ We are told, that in the *Athenian* and *Roman* Senates, when things of no greater moment were debated, than whether *Milo* was innocent or guilty, whether War was to be declared against *Philip*, and the like; yet those that were present were moved, grew pale, trembled and wept.”

Were a *Demosthenes* or *Cicero* to discourse in our Assemblies, of the great and eternal Truths of our Religion, would it be with that Indifference and Coldness, too commonly observed in many of the Preachers of our Day? Would they not be filled with the greatest Ardour; and such as could not but cause strange Emotions, and draw Tears from an Auditory? Was it not thus the Apostles preached? And what was the effect? Many thousands *smote upon their Breasts, and cried, What shall we do**? Therefore,

Whilst in preaching, as well as in composing, keep in view the great End of your Ministry, which is, to convert Men, to reclaim them from Vice and Error, and to lead true Converts on to higher degrees of Holiness, and thereby to fit them for an holy and happy World.

When you are fir'd with an ardent Zeal for the Salvation of Men, it will make you speak with Life, and will command a stricter and more serious Attention in your Hearers; and what you deliver will make its way, through God's Blessing, with greater Force to their Hearts and Consciences, to cause penitential Sorrow, or divine Love, or a lively

* Acts ii. 37.

lively Faith, or some other Grace, suitable to your Subject, to exercise it self. And the forenamed elegant Writer has said, "For my part, I would chuse rather to force a single penitential Tear from an obdurate Sinner, than to charm the whole Court with some fine and beautiful Description."

3. Another part of your publick Work, as a Minister, is, *To administer the Sacraments*, the Seals of the New Covenant, *Baptism*, and *the Supper of the Lord*. And here you are to take heed, both *whom* you admit to them, and *how* you administer them.

As to the *Persons* to be admitted to these sacred Institutions, I cannot think it agreeable to the Mind of Jesus, the great Law-giver in his Church, that all Persons should be admitted indifferently and indiscriminately. If Heathens are not to be baptized, until they are first instructed in the Christian Religion, and profess their Belief of it, (and I know none that say they are;) then, what Right can they have to that holy Seal, who, though they take upon them the Christian Name, are really worse than Heathens, and greater Enemies to all serious Godliness? Will that pretended *Faith, which, not being accompanied with good Works*, St. James saith, *is dead* *, give Men a Right to the Seals of the Covenant of Grace; when it is manifest, from the Unholiness of their Lives, that they have no Interest in that Covenant? And if they have no Right themselves, whence should their Children have any? Is it not through them only they can have any Right? And if profane and ungodly Men, continuing such, have no Right to Baptism, it is strange to think they should have any Right to the other Seal, they being alike sacred and of the same solemnity.

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* James ii. 17.

As to the *Manner* of administering these Ordinances ; it is the safest keeping as near the original Institutions, and the sacred Patterns, as may be. Only let me add with regard to *Baptism*, Let it be done *publickly*, in the Church and worshipping Assembly, as often as it can, with conveniency. A publick Baptism is certainly to be preferred to a private one, as it is accompanied with much greater Advantages. A greater Number of Persons will hereby be instructed in the nature of this Gospel-Ordinance ; you will have a good opportunity of acquainting young People with the meaning of that Covenant, they were solemnly entred into in their Infant-state, and of pressing them to take those Vows upon themselves, and to renew the Covenant personally ; and of exhorting all baptized Persons to come to the holy Table, and to perform all things whatsoever Jesus hath commanded them : And, which should encourage religious Parents to bring their Children into the publick Assembly, the whole Assembly join in fervent Prayers to Heaven, for Blessings on them and their Children.

4. In exercising that godly *Discipline*, which the Redeemer has appointed in his Churches, you are also to take heed. In all the parts of it, such as admitting to Communion, reprovng and admonishing, and casting out, you are to *preside* : but yet it may be prudent, in every one of these, to have the Advice and Consent of the Brethren.

In your *Admissions*, have a strict regard to the Honour and Authority of the Redeemer ; and neither make the sacred Inclosure a *Common*, lest it become a Waste ; nor yet *straiter* and *narrower* than he has left it, lest you thereby keep out such as he would have admitted.

And in *Reproofs* and *Suspensions*, let all be done with the Spirit of Love, and Meekness, and discover a sincere Desire, not to expose, but to reform,

form. In the purest Times of the Christian Church, there was no Commutation of Penance for Money; but the Offenders stood long in the Place, and Habit, and Manner of Penitents, giving the fullest Proofs of a deep and sincere Humiliation, before they could be received again into the Church's Bosom, and to full Communion with the Faithful. Alas! how much is this sacred Discipline now wanted! How sadly neglected, though so often prayed for!

2. There are other Parts of your Duty, as a Minister, which are of a *private* Nature, and which you ought to take heed to. As

Visiting the Flock, over which, according to the Appointment of the Holy Ghost, you are made an Overseer. In the Epistle, under the Name of *Ignatius to Polycarp*, we are told, "That the Bishops were obliged to inquire after all under their Charge by Name, and not proudly to overlook the Men-Servants and Maid-Servants." I own, 'tis difficult to make our Visits so serviceable to religious Purposes as we could wish; either unsuitable Company, or Converse about other Affairs, prevent more edifying Discourses. And yet I can't but think, that if we had more Courage and more Zeal, and were to watch for a proper Opportunity, we might sometimes find one, to drop a Word or two that might be useful.

Observe, if any are particularly affected under your Ministry, and seek for an Opportunity of conversing with them, and by using an agreeable Freedom with them, you will encourage them to open their Minds to you; whereby you may have a fair occasion to say something to their advantage. And be always ready, when desired, to assist any by your Counsels or your Prayers. We are told, in the Life of the late excellent Mr. *Henry*, "That he was best pleased with those

“ Visits in which his Friends put him upon praying with them; and whatever his Entertainment had been, if he parted without Prayer, it was not so much to his Satisfaction.”

In visiting *the Sick*, stay not always, till you are sent for, if you have reason to think your Visit will give no offence. In those serious Moments, People are better prepared for receiving Instruction, and you will have a fair Opportunity of saying something that may be awakening, or comforting, or edifying, as their Cases may require. The Frailty and Uncertainty of Life; the daily nearer Approaches of Death; the following Judgment; and an endless Eternity, are solemn Subjects; and may very suitably, at such a time, be discoursed on in an affecting manner. You may at such a time (without making a direct Application to the Person you would instruct, if that would give offence,) represent the Folly of a sinful Life, as it fills the Mind with Guilt and Fears, and makes the Apprehensions of Death affrighting; and what is necessary to make Men die well, and to fit them for a World of perfect Purity and Bliss after Death. And fear not to shake Men off from their sandy Foundations, their presumptuous Confidences, and their false deceiving Hopes, and to tell them plainly what that is, without which they can never be saved.

No part of your Work will require more Courage or Prudence, than giving private *Reproof*. *You are not to let Sin lie upon your Brother; but are in any wise to rebuke him**. But to do it in the most acceptable manner, so as to answer the desired End, is no small Difficulty. *Publick* Reproof may exasperate: *private* may reform, if it be done with all Gentleness and Compassion, in a way that shows you love the Man, at the same time that

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you admonish him for his Fault. But if after all your Prudence and Caution you should be so unhappy as to offend, you will have the Satisfaction of having done your Duty, and endeavoured his Amendment; he, in his cooler Thoughts, and in his Conscience, will approve your Fidelity; and, what is more than all, you will be approved of your Judge, and find Acceptance with the Almighty.

Having thus laid before you some of those Duties that are incumbent on you, as a Minister of Jesus, give me leave,

II. To point at some of those *Difficulties* you must expect to meet with in the faithful Discharge of your Office, and which render the Exhortation, *to take heed*, so necessary. If there were no Difficulties attending sacred Ministrations; if Persons, called to this honourable Employment, were to meet with no Discouragements in the way of their Duty, no Enemies, nor Oppositions, there would have been no need of this Advice of an inspired Apostle to *Timothy* and *Archippus*, *To take heed to themselves, and to their Ministry*. But Reason, Scripture, and Experience confirm this Truth; that he who desires to discharge the important Trust with Zeal and Fidelity, so as to approve his Conduct to *the great Searcher of Hearts*, must expect to meet with peculiar Difficulties and Trials, such as common Christians are unacquainted with. And he that engageth in this Warfare, against the Lusts, and Prejudices, and Passions of Men, and against the Powers of Darkness, and does not expect to encounter great Difficulties, has not sat down to count the Cost; and it will be well if he be not soon driven back, or put to shame and confusion. For,

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1. Every faithful Minister of Jesus will experience a *Backwardness in his own Flesh*, to the performance of those Duties his Office calls for. As in every Christian, *the Flesh lusteth against the Spirit*, and *warreth against the Law of the Mind*; so does it more especially oppose the severer Exercises of frequent praying and fasting; the Mortification and Self-denial, the painful studying and watching, and the other Duties belonging to the ministerial Function. A Minister, that would be faithful, must sometimes deny himself in his innocent Pleasures, in his Ease, and Sleep, and Refreshments; and must sometimes rise early, and sit up late, and study to Weariness. To all which the Flesh will oft oppose itself, and will say, as *Peter* to his Lord when he would have dissuaded him from suffering, Master, save thy self. You will oft find it thus suggesting to you, This is too much, more than is required; you will by such close Applications injure your Health, and shorten your Days; good Master spare thy self. But you may reply, as Dr. *Cumberland*, Bishop of *Peterborough*, did to one using somewhat the same Language to him; "It is better to wear out, than to rust out." And follow the Example of the great Apostle, and be willing *to spend and be spent* in such honourable Service, and for the good of Souls*.

2. You must expect to be opposed in your Work by the Powers of Darknes. The great Enemy of Mankind will rage when his Kingdom is invaded, and his Captives released, and Light breaks in upon his gloomy Regions.

Has God, by putting his Spirit upon you, *anointed you to preach good Tidings to the Meek, to bind up the Broken-hearted, to proclaim Liberty to the Captives, and the opening the Prison to them that*

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are bound*? Be assured, the strong armed Man will not let his Prisoners go out in Peace, and without strong Opposition; and the more zealous and the more successful you are in your Ministry, the more enraged and violent will he be against you. Is he stiled, *The Accuser of the Brethren*†? And can it be expected he should be more favourable to the Ministers of Jesus? We read ||, *that when the pious Joshua stood up to minister before the Lord in the High Priest's Office, Satan the great Adversary stood at his right hand to resist him.* And so it may be with you, you may sometimes find him accusing, assaulting and opposing you, when preparing for your Work, and when engaged in it.

3. Prepare likewise to meet with *Reproach from the World.* No one can set himself to stem the Tide of Wickedness, to oppose the Lusts of Men, and to reform Mankind, but he must look for bad Usage. The holy and blessed Jesus, though perfectly innocent and blameless, and his Apostles, *who followed him in the Regeneration*‡, (i. e. were engaged in the same Design of regenerating and reforming the World) were evil intreated; and all Gospel-Ministers, who desire to be faithful, must expect no kinder Treatment. The Business you profess, viz. that of a Reformer, is sufficient to create you Enemies not a few; and you cannot take upon you to turn Men from those pleasurable Ways of Sin they have long accustomed themselves to walk in, and to press them to walk by Virtue's severer Rules, to lead them into the ways of Holiness which they have a dislike to, and to interrupt them in their Pursuit of criminal Pleasures, to denounce the Threatnings of the Almighty against those that refuse Obedience to the
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* Isa. lxi. 1.

† Rev. xii. 10.

|| Zech. iii. 1.

‡ Mat. xix. 28.

divine Commands, and to bear a publick Testimony for God, and against their evil Practices, by a contrary Course of Piety and Holiness, and hope to escape all Reproach and Censure. Be assured, there are some in our loose and corrupt Age, as well as in that in which St. Peter lived*, *who will think it strange, that you run not with them into the same Excess of Riot, and will, for that reason, speak evil of you.*

4. Add to this melancholy Account, *the Sights*, it is possible, you may meet with, from some, you thought, *your Friends*, and *the Unsuccessfulness of your Labours* amongst those to whom you minister. You will be happy above most Men, if you meet with no Discouragements of this kind; I pray God you may not. But remember you are to preach, not to perfect Creatures, not to Angels, but to Men; who, if they were perfect, would not need your Labours. It is probable, that after all your Endeavours to convert and reclaim Men, there may be some going on still indulging their Lusts, and living after the Flesh, and going on in that broad Road that leadeth to Destruction; and others who have given in their Names to Jesus, and sealed their Covenant at his Table, too covetous and worldly-minded, too censorious and uncharitable, too proud and self-confident, and far from that Strictness and Purity which the Gospel requires of all that profess it. Perhaps, after the most painful Study to say something that may awaken the careless Sinner, and when labouring as in Birth, with the greatest Ardor, that Christ may be formed in their Souls, you may see them sleeping sound under your Ministry, or gazing about altogether careless and unconcerned. And this cannot but give a pious Minister, who has a compassion for the Souls of Men, no small

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* 1 Pet. iv. 4.

Uneasiness: It must grieve him at the heart, to see the great Pains he has taken meet with so little Success and Acceptance.

And yet notwithstanding all these Difficulties in the way of your Duty,

III. The Gospel will afford you *the strongest Motives and Encouragements* to go on with your Work. As,

1. The Service you are engaged in is the most *honourable* and *beneficial*; honourable in itself, and beneficial to Mankind.

What can be more *honourable*, than to stand in the Place of your great Master, and in his Name to beseech Sinners to be reconciled to God? To be serviceable to Men in their eternal Interests, and to promote their everlasting Welfare? To bring Men back to God; to deliver them from the worst of Slaveries; to open blind Eyes, and set at liberty the most miserable Captives; to heal diseased Minds, restoring them to their primitive Rectitude, and make them like the Angels, and to bear a Resemblance to the blessed God himself; to recover them out of the Snare of the Devil, and pluck them as Fire-brands out of the Fire; to save them from everlasting Perdition, and train them up for a blessed and glorious Immortality; — these are the Services you are called to, and to which you have this Day solemnly devoted yourself.

Not that you can do all this of yourself, but herein *you are to be a Worker together with God**; who has appointed the Ministry to these happy Purposes, and will accompany it with his Blessing to make it effectual. And can a wise or good Man desire any greater Honour than to be engaged in such kind Offices? Is it not the sincere

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Desire of every virtuous Man, to be useful in Life? And, can any Ministrations be more useful than this? The meer designing and endeavouring to serve Men in their everlasting Interests, will afford such a Satisfaction, as may abundantly recompense the most painful Labours.

2. *You serve a good Master*, who will take you under his special Protection. Are you a Servant to Men, in the Concerns of their Souls? It is for Jesus' sake. He is your great Lord, who commissioneth and sendeth you out, and whose Commands and Orders you are to obey and follow. And can you be ambitious of any greater Honour, than to be *the Servant of Christ*? Is not this the Title the great Apostle gloried in, in several of his Epistles? What if the World reproach you, and the great Adversary stir up some falsely to accuse you, and to oppose your Ministrations? Jesus will be your *Patron*, and your *Advocate*. For when *Joshuab* stood up to minister before the Lord, and *Satan* stood up to resist him, *The Lord, i. e. the Lord Christ*, took his Servant's part, pleaded his cause, and said, *The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; the Lord, that hath chosen Jerusalem, rebuke thee: Is not this a Brand plucked out of the Fire?* * We live in a day in which the Ministry hath, not *one* only, but *many* Adversaries, many false Accusers. Never perhaps was the sacred Office treated with more contempt and ridicule. But Jesus the Lord will take his sincere and faithful Servants under his Patronage, will plead their cause against those that stand up against them, and will, one day, confess their Names with honour, to the confusion of all their unjust Accusers.

Go on then in his Name, and in the faithful Discharge of the Duties of your high and holy Cal-

* Zech. iii. 2.

Calling, and he will magnify your Office, and secure the Dignity and the Credit of it.

And then, as Jesus is your Patron, so,

3. You may reasonably expect all *necessary Supplies of Light and Strength, Direction and Counsel, from him*, answerable to your various Wants and Exigencies. The Work indeed is great and difficult, which has caused many faithful Ministers of Jesus to take up the Apostle's Words, and say *, *Who is sufficient for these things?* — Who is sufficient to speak of the vast Disproportion between Time and Eternity, — of the Worth of immortal Souls, — or of the invisible Realities of the other World; — to set forth the eternal Joys and Felicities of Heaven, and the endless Miseries of the infernal Pit! — Who is sufficient to treat of the Nature of the infinite and blessed God, — and to display his immense and glorious Perfections! — Who is able to declare all the Ways and Methods of God, in dealing with Sinners; — to assist them in the new Birth, — and to shew them, unerringly, the Way that leads to Life, to Glory! Who can unfold the Heart, and lay open all its Deceits, and Wickednesses; — or discover all the Wiles and Stratagems of the great Destroyer; — or detect the many Snares and Dangers of the World, by which many thousand Souls have been drawn aside, and ruined! To speak as under the Eye of an omniscient and holy God, — as those that expect to appear before him in Judgment, and give an account of their Ministry; — and, in a word, so to speak, as that *they who believe may be saved, and they who believe not, and perish*, may be rendered inexcusable; who is sufficient for these things!

But when we are ready to be discouraged at our own Weakness, as not being equal to the arduous

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* 2 Cor. ii. 16.

Task, *we may be strong through the Grace that is in Christ Jesus. In him all Fulness dwells. All Power in Heaven and Earth is in his hands:* And he has promised *to be with his Ministers, in the conscientious discharge of their Duty, to the End of the World.* If he stand by you with his Aid, what have you to fear? His Eye will inspire you with courage, his Hand uphold and strengthen you. Difficulties cannot daunt a brave Spirit, but rather inflame with a greater Ardour. *Whatever mountainous Difficulties may be thrown up in your way, go on, in the Name of Jesus, and they shall become a Plain before you*.* For *Jesus strengthening of you, you may do all things.*

4. *Your Rewards will be great and glorious.* The Pharisees, in our Saviour's day, by snatching at a present Reward of their Religious Services, lost that which is future and better. *Verily, I say unto you, † they have their Reward †; or, they hinder their Reward,* i. e. by seeking the Applause of Men, as a present Reward, they cut themselves off from any Share in those better and more glorious Rewards, which God will, another day, bestow on his upright Servants. Wait then for your full Reward, till the great Day of Remuneration, and your Labour of Love, your painful, useful Services shall be had in everlasting Remembrance. The Rewards you expect are worth waiting for. Envy not others their lordly Titles, their high Preferments, or their rich Revenues; *a Servant of the Churches,* is a Title much more becoming a Disciple of the humble Jesus; which, if you are chiefly ambitious of, and are careful to fill up the Duties of your Office with Integrity and Diligence, then may you justly expect to have your Name mentioned with Honour, by the great Judge of the whole World, and to hear those joyful Words pro-

* Zech. iv. 7. † Mat. vi. 5. ἀπὸ τοῦ μισθὸν αὐτῶν.

pronounced on you, *Well done, good and faithful Servant, enter thou into thy Master's Joy.* That Jesus, to whose Service you have now devoted your self, and who sends you to preach his Gospel, and edify his Body, the Church, will be ever with you, to observe your Diligence, your Watchings, your Self-denial, and your painful Labours, and will come again with rich Rewards in his hands, when *they who have turned many to Righteousness, shall shine as Stars in the Firmament, for ever and ever* *.

To conclude: Are the Duties of your high Calling many, and the Difficulties great? Remember, that *every good and perfect Gift cometh down from the Father of Lights*; and ask *Wisdom of God, who giveth liberally to them that sincerely ask, and upbraideth not.* And often review this Day's Solemnity, the Vows you have now made, the Oath of God you have entred into, and be faithful to them; and then, *when the chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a Crown of Glory, that fadeth not away*† Which that every faithful Minister, and every sincere Christian here present, may obtain, God, of his infinite Mercy, grant, for the sake of his blessed Son JESUS, our only Lord and Saviour; to whom be Glory in the Churches, World without End. *Amen.*

* Dan. xii. 3. † 1 Peter v. 4.

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